

NUTRITION

Fad Diets: What You Need to Know

A fad diet is a weight loss plan or aid that promises dramatic results. These diets don't offer long-term success, and they are usually not very healthy. Some of them can actually be dangerous to your health.

If fad diets don't work, why are they so popular?

People are often willing to try anything that promises to help them lose weight because they want to look or feel better, or because they are worried about getting weight-related diseases. Companies that promote fad diets take advantage of this fact. They appeal to people by promising weight loss that's very quick and easy. Many people prefer to try the quick fix of a fad diet instead of making the effort to lose weight through long-term changes in their eating and exercise habits.

Fad diets also become popular because many of them do work for a short time. In many cases, this is because when you stop eating certain types of food or eat "special" combinations of foods, you are getting fewer calories than you normally would. You are also paying more attention to what you are eating. However, it's likely that much of the weight you lose is from water and not body fat. Also, most people are not able to keep up with the demands of a diet that strictly limits their food choices or requires them to eat the same foods over and over again. People who use fad diets usually end up gaining back any weight that they lost.

How can I recognize fad diets?

As a general rule, steer clear of diets or diet products that do any of the following:

- Claim to help you lose weight very quickly (more than 1 or 2 pounds per week). Remember, it took time for you to gain unwanted weight and it will take time to lose it.
- Promise that you can lose weight and keep it off without giving up "fatty" foods or exercising on a regular basis. If a diet plan or product sounds too good to be true, it probably is.
- Base claims on "before and after" photos.
- Offer testimonials from clients or "experts" in weight loss, science or nutrition. Remember that these people are probably being paid to advertise the diet plan or product.
- Draw simple conclusions from complex medical research.
- Limit your food choices and don't encourage you to get balanced nutrition by eating a variety of foods.
- Require you to spend a lot of money on things like seminars, pills or prepackaged meals in order for the plan to work.

